Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski: On the Date of his Death

Piotr Muchowski  Arie Yariv
Adam Mickiewicz University  Tel Aviv University

Abstract
According to Jacob Mann, Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski, a prominent pupil of Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham of Troki, died after 1624. This article quotes some new data on the date of his death and proves it should be established within a few years after 1603. It points out that most probably Malinowski left Troki and moved to Łuck in 1602. The article also gives a brief genealogy and a list of his works.

Keywords
Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski (Joseph ben Mordecai Malinowski), Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham of Troki (Isaac ben Abraham of Troki), Polish-Lithuanian Karaites, Karaites in Troki, Karaites in Birże

Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski is one of the best-known Karaite scholars from Lithuania at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. He was a student of the famous Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham of Troki, who entrusted him with the completion of Ḥizzuq 'Emuna.¹ He also authored numerous works. The most known of them are Seḥer ha-'Elep Ėka (Šelomo),² Qiṣṣur 'Inyan haš-Šeḥita³ and Seḥer Minhagim,⁴ which appeared in print. Moreover, his oeuvre includes a

¹ See the introduction to Ḥizzuq 'Emuna by Yosef ben Mordekhay (Haqdamat Talmid ham-Mehabber).
² Edited by Menashe ben Israel in Amsterdam, 1643.
³ This treatise is also known under the title Qiṣṣure haš-Šeḥitot, based on 'Adderet Eliyyahu. Edited in Wien, 1830, cf. [MALINOWSKI] 1830.
number of works of poetry\(^5\) and commentaries to various passages of ‘Adderet ‘Eliyyahu\(^6\) and Tokaḥat ‘aken yeš li-ḥida.\(^7\)

Simḥa Łucki (Lusqi/Lutski) gives the following description of his literary output in Ner Ṣaddiqim:\(^8\)

“The prominent scholar, divine philosopher, rav ribbi Yosef, son of the honourable sir rav Mordekhay, the martyr, may the Lord avenge his blood, was a student of rav ribbi Yiṣḥaq, mentioned above, righteous of blessed memory. He wrote an excellent explanation and esteemed commentary to ‘Eṣer ‘Iqqarim in the ‘Adderet book. In addition to this, he wrote an excellent and profound commentary on ‘Arayot in the ‘Adderet book. Moreover, he wrote a summary of ‘Inyan haš-Šeḥīta in the ‘Adderet book. What is more, he wrote

\(^5\) Al Neurz bas sod bekidush rab: SzyszmaN 1892b: 83–84; Schocken Institute for Jewish Research 13555, 127v–130v; Bodleian Library 2777, 2r–3r; Abk 3, 180v–182v;

\(^6\) Among others to ‘Aṣara ‘Iqqarim, Šabbat, Seder Našim, Mila, etc. Cf. NLR Evr I 664, 1r–31v; JTS (Jewish Theological Seminary) 3459, 303r–323v; JTS 3359, 70r–81v; BNU 3974, 89r–116v; Abk 3, 331v, 1–332v, 6; 341r, 4–341r, 13.

\(^7\) Cf. SzyszmaN 1892a: 22–23. IOM (the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy) C 74, 3r–3v; IOM B 415, 5v–6v; IOM C 74, 3r–3v; NLI Evr II a 156–1, 4v–6v.

\(^8\) Ner Ṣaddiqim, chapter 10; cf. MANN 1935: 1431 (HUC Ms 849, 137v (227v)):
our book Minhagim, according to which we, all communities of the Lithuanian and Polish areas, act today. Moreover, he wrote a pleasant small book, perfect in its beauty, in the manner of prayer and plea, called Ha-ʾelep leka, which consists of a thousand words, each word begins with he. It was published in Amsterdam. Apart from that, he wrote an esteemed commentary to Haqdamat ʾasula of rav ribbi Aharon the First,9 saint of the Lord. And other works. All of them have been in our hands until today.”

Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski was a member of one of the most distinguished Lithuanian Karaite families, i.e. the branch of the Malinowski family descended from the shofet (Pol. wojt) “Pan Jesko” (Sir Jesko)10. He was a grandson of Yosef, shofet, son of Mordekhay, rofe and shofet11 (it is not clear when he held the position of the shofet). It is known that his grandmother Esther, daughter of Nisan (wife of Yosef the shofet) came from Łuck (died in 1590). Yosef was born to the marriage of Mordekhay haq-qadosh ben Yosef and Malka. His parental uncle was Avraham, the shofet (father of nine sons; he held the position of the shofet at the beginning of the 17th century12). Despite the fact that Yosef ben Mordekhay was married, it is likely that he died childless (with no male descendant in any case). Yosef ben Mordekhay was buried in Luck.13

To date, Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski’s biography has been best described by Jacob Mann (cf. Mann 1935: 718–720). However, the exact dates of his birth and death are unknown. According to the widely accepted findings of Jacob Mann, Yosef ben Mordekhay died after 1624 and was born about 1570.

In this article, we quote some data from the manuscripts in the Firkowicz collection which allow for a revision of Jacob Mann’s findings and a more precise determination of the dates of his birth and death.

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9 We were not able to find this work of Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski. Por. Szyzm 1891: 166; Mann 1935: 446–447, note 2.
11 Another student of Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham of Troki, Yoshiyahu ben Yehuda, was also a great-grandson of Mordekhay, rofe and shofet, son of Yosef, a shofet, cf. Abraham Firkowicz’s notes in NLR F 972 no. 130, fol. 14v; NLR Evt II A 161–2 fol. 14r.
13 Cf. Evt II a 161–2, 1r; Szysman 1891: 459 (Sefer Minhagim); Mann 1935: 720.
The first record is a fragment in the manuscript *Seperi ha-Refu’ot* (NLR Evr I 732) of Avraham ben Yoshiyahu (1636–1687) about his son Yosef, later haazzan in the Nowe Miasto community, who was born in 1666. The fragment reads as follows:

"[...] And I gave him a name in remembrance of two scholars and righteous men who were members of my family. The first one is the notable scholar, honourable sir, rav ribbi Yosef, called Malinowski, son of the honourable sir rav ribbi Mordekhay, may the Lord avenge his blood, who died at the age of 34 in Luck and passed away leaving no sons to commemorate him. The other one is the honourable sir rav ribbi Yosef, son of the honourable ribbi Shelomo, the gabbay, may the memory of the righteous one be blessed. He also died leaving no sons [...]"

The information in Avraham ben Yoshiyahu’s note that Yosef ben Mordekhay died at the age of 34 was previously unknown. It seems perfectly reliable as it comes from a son of Yoshiyahu ben Yehuda (1588–1663), who was Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham’s student, like Yosef ben Mordekhay, and was written in 1666. It is worth noting that the manuscript *Seperi ha-Refu’ot* is an autograph. This is extremely significant, as the reliability of the document that casts doubt on Jacob Mann’s finding that Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski died after 1624 cannot be questioned on the basis of a corrupted text or other reasons.

The approximate date of Yosef ben Mordekhay’s death, i.e. after 1624, established by Mann was based on Noaḥ ben Yeshaya’s letter marked in his edition with accession no. 124 (= NLR Evr I Dok II, 49). This letter was sent to Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski by Noaḥ ben Yeshaya, *melammed* and *shoḥet* in Birże (or Biržes), who had most likely moved to the town with a group of Troki Karaites. The town belonged to the Lithuanian Prince Krzysztof Radziwill at

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14 Cf. NLR Evr I 732, fol. 56r. See fig. 1.
that time. The following date can be found in this letter: Sunday, 25th Eytanim (i.e. Tishri) 385 according to the short count. It must be emphasised that this is the only dated document quoted by Mann which mentions Yosef ben Mordekhai Malinowski. However, the examination of the note in the manuscript NLR Evr II a 49, fol. 1v (see fig. 2) on which Mann’s edition was based, calls this finding into question. It can be clearly seen that the year was added by a different hand (i.e. not by Noah ben Yeshaya), probably the same which added the note beginning with words על אל אגרות על ה镜子 on the margin (we suppose, it might be the hand of Gabriel, Abraham Firkowicz’s son-in-law). Doubtlessly, the year 385 was added according to the calendar of new moons for 384 and 385, which are on the left side (see fig. 2). Contrary to Mann’s statement (cf. MANN 1935: 1198), the notes were not written by Noah ben Yeshaya’s (they are written in different hand-writing, a cursive style known from Constantinople, and were possibly added about 1624 on the reverse side of the folded letter). It is not known whether a year was included in the date in the letter at all, or if it was illegible and was added for this reason. The above findings are confirmed by Abraham Firkowicz’s note about the manuscript Evr I Dok II, 49 from the mid-19th century, in which he pointed out that the letter originated in 363, or later:

\[\text{לכומריי יוספ הנלי בכמירי מרדכי הקדוש (במקומן היי)}\]

\[\text{מאמות מתיי ויהווח המחבר בציבור ישיעי בקך} \,\]

\[\text{על אודוות עומדים אלישע בן מרדכי אושרו גון ולירת} \]

\[\text{ולשיגהו משלות עתודות} \,\]

\[\text{על הירש אשר דרש בקול ביר} \]

\[\text{והס הר ליפך העולם והנרי ובמעי לשלות הנסה אל} \]

\[\text{וכו על אודוות ממלאות神通א שמלכתם על באלי} \]

\[\text{אודוUTF UIL גלשות ול, ומוכי את הכריך משח הדימן ב} \]

\[\text{ם} \]

\[\text{ם}\]

16 It is likely that the Karaite community in Birże developed some time after 1589 when King Sigismund III Vasa granted special privileges to the inhabitants of the town which exempted them from paying tolls and customs for 25 years. Cf. BARDACH 1990: 199.

17 Cf. MANN 1935: 1198: נכתב ביום א’ לשבוע כ”ה לר”ח איתנים שפ”ה לפ”ק.

18 The same hand is found in the manuscript Evr II A 439 which includes a sermon (derash) given in Luck in 1635, cf. folio 3 recto (the name of the preacher and the copyist was not noted; perhaps it is the hand of Iśhaq ben Simha, cf. MANN 1935: 718). The list of new moons in Evr I Dok II 49, 1 verso was probably based on the calculation guidelines sent by Josef Delmedigo to Zaraḥ ben Natan, cf. FÜNN 1867–1868, MANN 1935: 678. Delmedigo exemplified them with the year 1624 (5384/5385).
On the right margin: 4. 19

שש״צ ואחר

“To the honourable sir rav Yosef, mentioned above, son of the honourable sir ribbi Mordekhay, the martyr (instead of: may the Lord avenge his blood) from the honourable sir, rav Noaḥ, ḥazzan, author, son of honourable sir ribbi Yeshaya in the holy community of Birže, regarding his student Elisha ben Mordekhay, who gave him the licence to practice as a ritual slaughterer. He is thanking him. On the sermon (derash) which he gave in the community of Birže. There he raised the above-mentioned rav. He intends to send him the text. Also [one] about the war against the Swedes who are fighting with the hetmans of Edom he is to send him. He mentions the venerable rav Moshe, the dayyan, ben Simḥa, and informs him that the Karaites’ inclination has been evil since their youth and they and their children have been evil for generations. There is nothing new among them; they succeed in nothing they undertake unless the rav has a hand in strengthening all arrangements. The honourable sir ribbi Moshe, the dayyan will present each case truly. Among us all, his heart is the biggest heart for the paths of truth, etc.

On the margin: 4. 363 or later.”

The mention of the war against Sweden is important for the determination of the actual date the letter was written. Noah ben Yeshaya writes:

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19 Evr 946 no. 130, fol. 4r.
20 I.e. 1603 in the Gregorian calendar.
We learn from the letter that the war against the Swedes was taking place at the time it was written. Mann presumed the letter was dated to 1624 and assumed that it was the Third Swedish War of 1621–1629 (MANN 1935: 1196). Yet for obvious reasons, if we rely on Avraham ben Yoshiyahu’s information that Yosef ben Mordekhay died at the age of 34, we should assume that it is rather the Second Swedish War of 1600–1611.

In the date in Noaḥ ben Yeshaya’s letter (Evr I Dok II 49, fol. 1v) only the year was corrected. The day of the week and the month seem authentic, they are: יום א׳ לשבוע כ״ה לר׳ח איתנים “Sunday, 25th Eyтанימ (Tishri)” (see fig. 2). In the Rabbanite calendar, 25th Tishri was on a Sunday only in 1601 (362) and 1608 (369) during the war of 1600–1611. Unfortunately, the data available to us are not sufficient to determine the Karaite calendar at the period in question.

21 Cf. MANN 1935: 1196–1197; Evr I Dok II 49, fol. 1 r.
Doubtlessly, the date of Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham of Troki’s death serves as an important premise for resolving the question of the date of the letter as well. It is known that when he died, Yosef ben Mordekhai, his student, was a young man, probably around 20 years of age. Geiger established that Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham died in 1594 (cf. Geiger 1853: 38, 44). Geiger based this date on the information in Seper ’Elim (Zaraḥ ben Natan’s first letter to Yosef Delmedigo), where we read:

“And Bathsheba went in unto Shelomo. His highest wisdom decided when I was five years old, to bring me turning around and round by his guidance (Job 37:12) in the palace garden of Yiṣḥaq, my father let me be beside him, a master craftsman, let me be a delight (Prov. 8:30), for the fruit of his thousand (Song of Sol. 8:11) and of his upper chambers (Amos 9:6). His soul rejected me in the year ‘an offering of praise’ (Lev. 19:24). Yiṣḥaq went out to pray (Gen. 24:63) towards evening in his upper chambers.”

The date of birth was read by him from the words קדש הלולים, according to the numerical value of the last letters in both words (קדש הלולים = 354). It is worth emphasising that 1594 as the date of Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham’s death was also found in Mordekhai ben Nisan’s note in Dod Mordekay (in the 1714 edition). Mann questioned Geiger’s reading of the date from קדש הלולים. He pointed out that no diacritical marks had been preserved above the relevant letters and emphasized some other data from Zaraḥ ben Natan’s letter, i.e. the author’s statement that he was 40 years at the time the letter was written (the letter contained the internal date of 380, i.e. 1620) and that 32 years had passed since the death of Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham from Troki. Mann assumed that the diacritical marks for the numerical value were contaminated and initially were not placed

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22 The Odessa edition from 1864: 3.
23 This term also has the meaning of the fourth year, cf. Lev 19:24.
25 נכתב ביום בית ויא׳ לאייר ויום כ״ג למספר שנת שף לעלמו, Seper ’Elim, the 1864 Odessa edition, p. 3.
above the last two letters in the two words קֶדֶשׁ הַלֻּלְעָי. He put forward the thesis that Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham from Troki died in 1586, in accordance with the information in Zaraḥ ben Natan’s letter stating that 32 years had passed between the date of his death and the writing of the letter, i.e. 1618.26 Mann established the year to be 1618 by modifying the date 1620 to make it correspond with the numerical value of the letters in קֶדֶשׁ הַלֻּלְעָי (he assumed it was possible that the relevant paragraph referred to an earlier period). He deemed the details in *Dod Mordekaḥ*, which was created dozens of years later (late 1600s), unreliable as they contradicted the information from Zaraḥ ben Natan, who was Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham’s student and a witness to his death. Mann accordingly established that Zaraḥ ben Natan was born eight years before Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham’s death, that is, in 1578 (cf. Mann 1935: 726–727). It is noteworthy here that like Mann, Simḥa Łucki established that Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham died in 1588, apparently by deducting 32 from 1620, which is the supposed date of the first letter from Zaraḥ ben Natan to Yosef Delemedigo.27

In spite of the fact that most researchers accept the date established by Geiger, the dispute described here still seems unresolved. The controversy is evident in, for example, the entry about Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham of Troki in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (by Leon Nemoy), which gives the year 1594 as the date of his death; however, provides it with the remark that: “according to Mann’s hypothesis, he was born and died eight years earlier than the above dates”.28 Similarly, the entry about Zaraḥ ben Natan (by Golda Akhiezer, the second edition of 2007), dates his birth to 1578,29 and thus repeats the supposed date of Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham’s death in 1586 after Mann. In regard to the discussed debate, we would

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27 HUC Ms 849 (Ner Ṣaddiqim) 137v (227v): הכהן השלם הר”ר יצחק בן יוחנן אברזר הכנסת: מי הלומד שלהר”ר צפיין יבלי יהו ברוח את אה; חכם הבכיר והנביא מלומד הכות אברזר הכנסת יהו בן יוחנן יישאר 북ו יבלי ונהבר את גלי יהו ברוח. מימי יבלי שבת הששים וחמש.
like to mention two premises in the manuscripts of the Firkowicz collection which were not noticed by Mann. Firstly, the NLR Evr I 728 Derushim manuscript includes sermons preached by Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham from Troki, and one of them is dated 1592. Secondly, the Evr I Dok II 59–64 manuscript includes Zaraḥ ben Natan’s work, and there is a clear reference to the date of Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham’s death in the work entitled “Ve-ze ḥibbur Zaraḥ ben ribbi Nat[an]”, marked with no. 28.59. The following passage can be found in lines 12–15:

“[...] Remember, o Lord, the one who is among the highest, poorest and homeless. Amazed and astonished. Their faces fall when they see me. It is to the alive man I speak, preach and sprinkle (with water). And (so) since 354, according to the short count. There has been no human or man. Those who are left, [will] they not follow them to the grave? Are there no hurt people among them? And if someone like a viper when they lie in wait [...]”

It appears that the two indicated texts allow us to ultimately disprove Mann’s thesis. The contradiction which was analysed by Mann and results from Zaraḥ ben Natan’s information that Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham had been dead for 32 years, can probably be explained by textual corruption. There is likelihood that in the original note the diacritical marks were above shin, pe and waw of the second word (רש לעלום שף), which gives us the number 386, that is, the year 1626 (32 years after 1594). Therefore, Zaraḥ ben Natan’s letter to Yosef Delmedigo should then be dated 1626 not 1620, and the date of Zaraḥ ben Natan’s birth should be determined as 1585/6.
Assuming as certain that Ishq ben Avraham died in 1593/4 (and was born 60 years earlier, i.e. in 1533/4), we can presume that Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski had to be at least 18 years old at that time (Zaraḥ ben Natan reports that he became his teacher immediately after Yiṣḥaq ben Avraham’s death). If so, he would have been 34 years old in 1610. Consequently, the year 1610 seems *terminus ad quem* for his life.

It seems that a crucial argument for the dating of Noaḥ ben Yeshaya’s letter is the NLR Evr II a 71a manuscript, entitled *Seper ham-Meliṣa*. This manuscript consists of 43 leaves which include a collection of works by Noaḥ ben Yeshaya. This was previously discussed by Israel Zinberg in his *Toldot Sifrut Isra’el*. This manuscript is not an autograph. The palaeography suggests it might be dated to the first half of the 18th century. Two dates were noted in the manuscript, the former on fol. 10r (bottom pagination): Monday, 26th Menahem, 5363 from the creation of the world, and the latter on fol. 43r: Wednesday, 19th shevat 5363 from the creation of the world. These notes indicate that the first part of the text (i.e. 1r–10r) was created later, at the beginning of August 1603, whereas the other earlier one (i.e. 10r–43r), at the end of January 1603. The part which is finished by the second colophon, namely from fol. 10r to fol. 34r, is particularly significant. It begins with the words: “The speech of Noaḥ, son of my lord and father, esteemed Yeshaya, let the one who walks uprightly enter into peace and rest on his bed (cf. Isa. 57:2)”. The contents of the work clearly indicate that we are dealing with the work mentioned in letter no. 124, i.e. “Ketav ha-ʾemet ve-had-derash”, which was to be sent to Yosef ben Mordekhay Malinowski. This text, partially written in a poetic form, is Noaḥ ben Yeshaya’s account of the situation in the Karaite community of Birże in the early 1600s. Yosef ben Mordekhay is the recipient of the text. On fol. 19r–19v, we read:

33 Cf. *Seper ʾElim*, in the Odessa edition from 1864, p. 4:


35 Yoḥi b’Melahah ci l’ḥolot muneḥo shet haḥadash, afel, ushish maḥat, ushish lelul, leharon, Bariḥat Ḥafiz.  

36 ushelmot u ḥecheror pes biʾẓuḥu, biʾẓuḥu b’ Responses, ushel malu, ushel lelul, leharon.
“I saw in the house of Yosef, great-grandson of Yosef – the one who understands the word, a handsome man, and the Lord is with him (cf. 1 Sam. 16:18), and wherever he turns he is victorious (1 Sa 14:47), and his success is his glory – his integrity, greatness, next to his righteousness. And all his peers rolled a granite stone on him (Isa. 28:16). In him there is grace and domination. The Lord’s spirit raised him up to the circle of the seven highest pleasant wisdoms. By the powers of the Most High he uttered his voice of discretion and knowledge. For pride he set him. The beauty of adornment is the pride of his name. He stood upon the beautiful pictures (Isa. 2:16). He accepted me and gave me the aromatic water of understanding to drink. His scent is still in my heart, from his leaving, when he rode a donkey-foal and a mule (cf. Zech. 9:9). Although he left me, like a tail, like smouldering tails, striped, spotted and piebald (cf. Gen 31:10–12), I chose wisdom and crimson garments (Isa. 63:1). I drew him on a carved stone and on the table of my heart (Prov. 7:3), to commemorate. Until my turn comes, I will follow him, for rav, my light and my glory, is the healing for my sickness […].

In the next part, Noah turns directly to Yosef many times. For example, he writes on fol. 21r – 21v:

A parallel note in Bet Zerubbabel of Yehuda ben Zerubbabel: (Abk 3, fol. 161v, 5–10) “[…] And this also added to my sadness to my sorrow, and grief to my grief, that our honourable great teacher, ribbi Yosef, scholar, son of our honourable great teacher ribbi Mordekhay, the martyr, may he rest on his bed in peace, a man who has the Lord’s spirit in him, left his house and abandoned his legacy, he saddled up his donkey and left because of the evil of the inhabitants of his town.[…]” Cf. Mann 1935: 1193–1195.

Play on words. The translation has been adapted to fit the context. The meaning based on Isa. 7:4: “smoking brands”.

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37 A parallel note in Bet Zerubbabel of Yehuda ben Zerubbabel: (Abk 3, fol. 161v, 5–10) “[..] And this also added to my sadness to my sorrow, and grief to my grief, that our honourable great teacher, ribbi Yosef, scholar, son of our honourable great teacher ribbi Mordekhay, the martyr, may he rest on his bed in peace, a man who has the Lord’s spirit in him, left his house and abandoned his legacy, he saddled up his donkey and left because of the evil of the inhabitants of his town.[[..]]” Cf. Mann 1935: 1193–1195.

38 Play on words. The translation has been adapted to fit the context. The meaning based on Isa. 7:4: “smoking brands”.
“[…] and I will send to you, rav, sending against those who spurned me, and I will not hide anything, I will undo all the bands of the yoke (cf. Isa. 58:6) downwards and trample, on the command of rav, all indignity and a man of no shame. And everyone who will want to, will be able to come and listen. And everyone who will want to see, will be able to see. Each enlightened one will be able to come and see. He will hold my rhetoric. And he will speak the truth. Thus, rav, give me your blessing. And your blessing will be like a double portion (cf. 1 Sam 1:5), so that you draw out your anger towards me. The Ephrathites,39 stutterers, who say sibboleth (cf. Judg. 12:6), unable (differently), who burn, burn fire in vain, and burned all ways and customs. They do not regard sages and scholars of the Torah. I will open my mouth and speak. I will knock out the teeth of sinners”.

Noaḥ writes about the situation in Birże. The local ḥazzan, who had been chosen shortly before, is an object of very emotional accusations, and so are his supporters, who play the dominant role in the community. Individual persons are not named but are given pseudonyms. Noaḥ accuses the incumbent ḥazzan of lacking the knowledge and skills required of a ḥazzan, breaking the law and indecent behaviour (e.g. lighting a fire and strolling on Shabbat, insult, anger, spitting in the synagogue, various violations of the rules of liturgy, a lack of sufficient knowledge of the holy language, etc.). Indeed, the content of the text gives us certainty that we are dealing with the work mentioned in Noaḥ’s letter, i.e. “Ketav ha-ʾemet ve-had-derash”. In this context, it is important that according to the information in the colophon on fol. 43r the work was completed in January 1603. It can be deduced from its content that at that time Yosef ben Mordekhay left Troki and moved to Łuck, but was definitely alive (he is also mentioned in the first part, finished in 1603).

The data above prove that the letter from Noaḥ ben Yeshaya to Yosef ben Mordekhay (Evr I Dok II 49) should be dated most probably to 1601 or 1602.

39 A term used to describe members of the Karaite community in Birże.
Unfortunately, we are not able to settle the problem of the date in this letter definitively. Dates from the year 5363 in preserved Karaite documents are not coherent. The calendar used by Noah ben Yeshaya in Birże probably differed from the one in Troki. Moreover, we were not able to find any dated Karaite documents from the year 5362 to contrast the date in the letter of Noah ben Yeshaya with it. The date 1602 seems to be favoured if we consider that “Ketav ha-ʾemet ve-had-derash”, which was mentioned in letter no. 124, was completed in January 1603. Historical data on the Second Swedish War of 1600–1611 indicate that in the period under consideration, Birże played an active role in the war. The hetman Krzysztof Radziwill, “Piorun” (“the Thunderbolt”), the owner of Birże, was one of the commanders in chief of the Polish-Lithuanian army during the campaign of 1601–1603. In the light of the presented data, it seems most probable that Yosef ben Mordekhay died after August 1603, but not later than 1610 (if we assume that he was at least 18 years old in 1594). Therefore, his life can thus be generally established as dating from 1569 to 1610.

**Bibliography**


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40 Among the other documents from the Firkowicz collection, there is only one dated 5363, i.e. Evr I Dok II 19 (MANN 1935: 792). It is a deed from Troki which bears the date Wednesday (*yom dalet*), 18th of Tevet, 5363. This date is in accordance with the Rabbinical calendar for the year 5363. However, the 25th of Tishri 5363, according to this calendar, falls on Thursday, not on Sunday (as in Evr I Dok II 49, fol. 1v). In the Rabbinical calendar, the 25th of Tishri falls on Sunday in the preceding year, i.e. in 5362. If the date in Evr I Dok II 49 was in accordance with the Rabbinical calendar, the letter of Noah ben Yeshaya would have to be dated to 5362, i.e. to October 1601 in the Gregorian calendar. However, we are not able to settle this, as we have no comparative material from this year. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the two dates in NLR Evr II a 71a are not consistent with the calendar of Troki as evidenced in NLR Evr I Dok II, 19. It suggests that the calendar of the Karaite community in Birże for 5363 was not coherent with the calendar (or calendars) of other Karaite communities.

Yosef ben Mordekhai Malinowski: on the date of his death


Arie Yariv, studied at Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel, and graduated from the Faculty of Arabic Language and Literature (1978) and the Faculty of Hebrew and Semitic Languages (1981). His Ph.D. dissertation *The Karaites in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Communal Institutions and Their Relations with the Rabbinic Jews, the Karaite Diaspora, and Other Minorities in the Country* was submitted in the School of Jewish Studies at Tel Aviv University in 2014.
Fig. 1 NLR Evr I 732, fol. 56 recto
Fig. 2 NLR Evr I Dok II, 49, fol. 1 verso